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ABSTRACT

PROGRESS TOWARD IMPROVEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN SMALL SCHOOLS OF TEXAS IS BEING MADE THROUGH THIS PROJECT BY (1) IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION, (2) USING NEW METHODS AND TECHNIQUES OF TEACHING, (3) INCREASING PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES OF TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS, AND (4) BROADENING COURSES OFFERED. PROJECT SCHOOLS PARTICIPATE IN A VARIETY OF ACTIVITIES TO BRING ABOUT CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENTS. THEREFORE, REGIONAL MEETINGS AND A 1-WEEK SUMMER WORKSHOP ARE PROVIDED FOR TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS OF THE 116 SCHOOLS. ALSO, THERE IS OPPORTUNITY FOR TALENTED STUDENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN COLLEGE-CENTERED SEMINAR PROGRAMS. AMONG THE INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, THE MULTIPLE CLASS INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM IS MOST WIDELY USED; HOWEVER, SOME SCHOOLS IMPLEMENT SUPERVISED CORRESPONDENCE COURSES, FLEXIBLE SCHEDULING, NON-GRADING OF GRADES 1-6, NON-GRADING OF READING PROGRAMS, OR TEAM TEACHING. EACH YEAR, SCHOOLS IN THE PROJECT PROVIDE SELF-EVALUATIONS OF THEMSELVES IN TERMS OF GOALS OF THE PROJECT, THUS MAINTAINING STRENGTHS AND CORRECTING WEAKNESSES OF THE PROGRAM AND ASSURING CONTINUED ENDEAVORS TOWARD EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE. A RELATED DOCUMENT IS ED 019 049. (AN)

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Texas Education Agency
Division of Administrative Services
Small Schools Project
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TEXAS SMALL SCHOOLS PROJECT 1967

I. Background

Since its inception, the Texas Small Schools Project has existed for the sole purpose of providing education of the highest quality for the children of Texas who are enrolled in schools having fewer than 500 students in twelve grades. Its guiding principle continues to be not only that "small schools can be good schools," but that small schools <u>are</u> good schools when cooperative effort, shared ideas, and progressive thinking combine in a voluntary self-improvement program. In implementing this philosophy, the staff and participants of the Project have focused their attentions on improving the quality of instruction, developing new methods and techniques of teaching, increasing professional competencies of teachers and administrators, and broadening course offerings.

II. History

In 1959, recognizing the special problems of small schools, the Texas Education Agency and the Texas Small Schools Association embarked on a joint venture for the improvement of educational opportunities in the small schools of Texas. The initial step was taken by the State Board of Education with the appointment of a temporary Advisory Commission on Small Schools to study the most serious problems.

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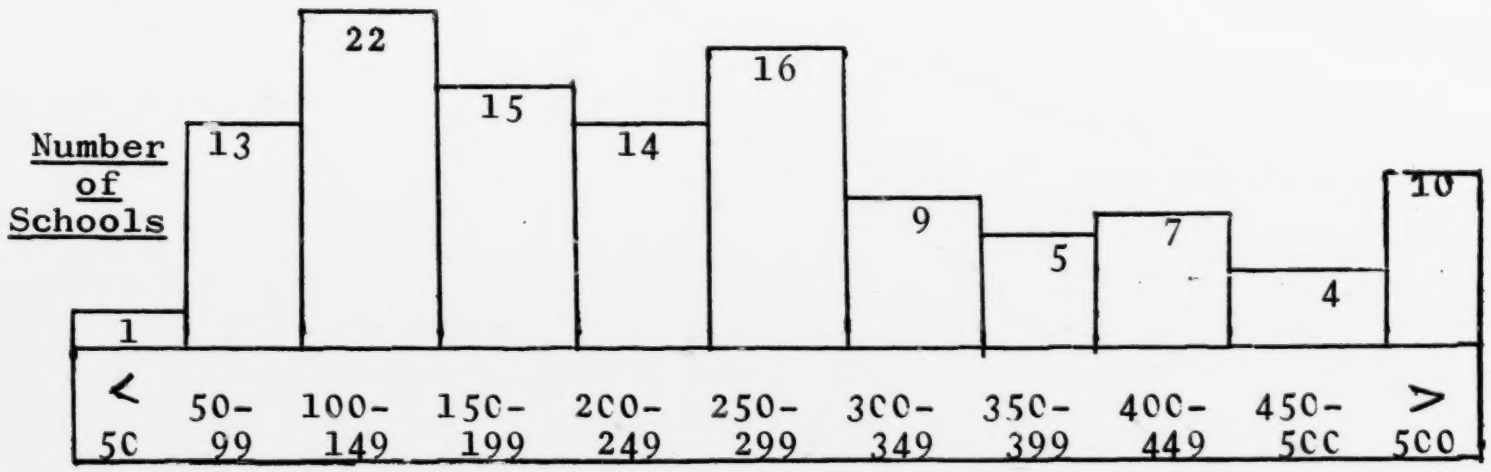
After extensive study by the commission, meetings and workshops for school administrators, and drafts of preliminary plans by the Agency staff, the exploratory study was completed in June, 1960. At this time the next phase, one of implementing the experimental program, began with 18 schools selected from among those that volunteered for participation in the pilot program. Since this first year of operation, the Project has grown steadily to a current size of 116 schools with approximately 27,120 students and 1750 teachers and administrators. The following chart shows the rate of growth of the Project.

Many expanded activities on all levels of participation--local school, regional, and statewide--attest to its vigorous progress.

III. Description of Member Schools

During the school year 1966-67, the Texas Small Schools Project included 116 schools organized into thirteen geographical regions. These regions, extending over all of Texas except the Panhandle and sourthern part of the state, varied from four to fifteen schools in membership.

The schools ranged in size from Mattson with 46 students to Coldsprings with 1,C32 students. The latter is one of ten schools whose enrollment has increased beyond 500 students but which has chosen to remain in the Project. The following graph shows the distribution of Project schools by number of pupils enrolled:



Number of Pupils Enrolled

With a total enrollment of 29,675 students reported in Project schools, the arithmetic mean is approximately 26C students per school, however, this figure is somewhat misleading since more than half the schools have enrollment totals of less than the mean figure.

IV. Organization

A. Staff and Sponsorship

The Texas Small Schools Project is a cooperative effort on the parts of the Texas Education Agency and the Texas Small Schools Association. The Project is under the

supervision of a director appointed by the Commissioner of Education. In addition, the Texas Education Agency provides three full-time consultants to serve Project schools in the areas of language arts, mathematics, and guidance.

B. Membership Requirements

To become a member of the Texas Small Schools Project, a school must meet the following requirements:

1. Have a total enrollment of fewer than 500 students in twelve grades
2. Be fully accredited
3. Be financially able to provide supplies and equipment necessary for project activities
4. Attend all project-approved workshops and meetings
5. Submit various required reports at specified times during the year
6. Participate in the Science Research Associates testing program in grades 7, 9, and 11.

During its first year in the Project, a new school is expected to pursue the following activities:

1. Conduct a community survey to ascertain the educational needs of children and to identify available resources
2. Initiate a complete self-evaluation of the school program

3. Evaluate the current guidance and testing program
4. Conduct a follow-up study on graduates and dropouts

After a school determines its needs, it should consider means of program revision and participation in various experimental project activities in such areas as staff utilization, instructional media, and curriculum organization.

C. Regional Organization

As a part of in-service training for teachers and administrators, each region holds regularly scheduled meetings. The number of meetings varies from four to seven and the length from two to four hours. Consequently, most of the regions provide more than twelve clock hours of in-service training for the year.

These regional meetings are commonly divided into general sessions, followed by special interest group meetings which are often planned by the teachers themselves. Many regions include a meal or refreshment period at some time during the meeting. Special consultants from the Texas Education Agency, nearby colleges, other Project schools, private foundations, and educational service organizations are utilized in most of these meetings.

The selection of meeting locations varies from region to region. Several regions meet at a centrally located school or college; some meet at different schools within the region; and others employ a combination of these choices. Distance, traveling time, meeting time, and available facilities are the prime factors in selection of meeting sites.

From the summary reports submitted by eleven of the thirteen regions at the end of the 1966-67 school year, the following strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations are made most often concerning the regional meetings:

Strengths

1. Visitation and observation of other schools
2. Teachers able to discuss common problems
3. Teachers often able to select own group leaders
4. Many outstanding speakers available for general sessions
5. Presence and help of Small School Project staff members
6. Well-qualified consultants available for interest group meetings
7. Close relationship with the Texas Education Agency

Weaknesses

1. Excessive travel time and expense in some cases
2. Some interest group meetings poorly organized
3. Lack of advance publicity about meetings

4. Lack of long-term planning for meetings
5. Some evidence of apathy among individual teachers
6. Degeneration of some group sessions into visiting sessions due to poor planning or failure of consultants to appear
7. Lack of participation by some schools
8. Too many "speeches" and not enough "demonstrations"

Recommendations

1. Each region should plan the full year's program at the first meeting.
2. New teachers need a better orientation to the program before school opens.
3. Interest groups in guidance should be provided.
4. Time spent in general sessions should be cut drastically unless there is a speaker or a planned program.
5. School board members should be encouraged to attend administrators' group sessions.
6. Each school should receive notices and meeting schedules well in advance.
7. Interest group chairmen should send pertinent information to individual members to inform and interest them about coming meetings.

D. Testing Program

A unified testing program has been employed since 1963 in order that schools might compare the achievement of their students with that of students throughout the state and the nation. Schools are required to utilize the testing program for grades seven, nine, and eleven. They are partially reimbursed for the cost of the seventh and ninth grade tests which are already a part of the regular State Testing Program. The results of these tests administered in the fall of 1966 are given in the appendix of this publication.

V. Individual Activities

A. Staff

The professional educational level of the 1,580 teachers and administrators of the 93 reporting Project schools during the school year 1966-67 is indicated in the following table:

Degree	Number	Approximate Percentage
None	74	4.7%
Bachelor's	964	61.0%
Master's	541	34.3%
Doctor's	1	.06%

Many schools share teachers and other supportive personnel under state and federal programs. Nurses counselors, librarians, supervisors, visiting and itinerant teachers often serve more than one school, chiefly on a county co-operative basis.

County Cooperative Services	Number of Schools
Counselors	37
Supervisors	16
Nurses	53
Physicians	2
Librarians	22
Itinerant teachers	9
Visiting teachers	7

Inter-school Shared Services	Number of Schools
Librarians	4
Music teachers	1
Remedial reading teachers	9
Vocational agriculture teachers	3
Vocational homemaking teachers	3

Teacher aides have become useful members of many small school staffs. These valuable, para-professional workers are utilized in a variety of non-teaching roles, chiefly in the clerical and secretarial areas, to relieve teachers from routine, time-consuming duties. Fifty-eight schools reported the use of a total of 106 teacher aides, an average of almost two for each school.

B. Equipment

During 1966-67 many project schools have made vast improvements not only in their school plants but also in their purchase of new instructional equipment. Sixty-seven out of eighty-four schools report recent

changes or additions to school plants. Items of new equipment reported by ten or more schools include overhead projectors, 16 mm. projectors, filmstrip projectors, opaque projectors, tape recorders, record players, controlled readers, tachistoscopes, and dry copy machines. Additional new equipment reported by fewer than ten schools includes primary typewriters, audiometers, reading laboratory equipment, dry mount presses, cameras, radios, diazo equipment, television sets, and duplicating machines.

C. Instructional Program

All project schools are encouraged to participate in a wide variety of activities in order to bring about continuous improvement in their instructional programs. One of the most widely used activities during 1966-67 is that of multiple classes, whereby two or more levels of the same subject, or more than one subject, are taught simultaneously by one teacher. Of the 84 schools who have been in the Project more than one year, 74 schools offer a total of 187 multiple classes. Although practically all high school subjects are included in the 90 grade and subject matter combinations, multiple classes in business education and in mathematics are mentioned most often. Tape recorders, dictaphones, and programmed instructional materials prove to be of great value in such classes.

Supervised correspondence courses, another technique for enriching small school curricula, are reported by 44 Project schools. A total of 163 students took 44 different courses from three sources. One hundred and twelve students took courses from the American School of Correspondence, 44 from Texas Technological College, and seven from the University of Texas. Several other schools reported that they ordinarily have several students involved in this program but have none during the current school year.

Flexible scheduling is another method used for improving the instructional program; however, only ten schools report its use, representing perhaps a slight increase over the number of schools previously involved in this activity. Rotating or floating periods and interchangeable morning and afternoon schedules are some characteristics of this type of scheduling which allows more class time for some subjects or allows them to be conducted at optimum times during the school day.

Another experimental instructional program that is being tried on a limited basis is the non-graded elementary school. Only one school reports having a non-graded program extending throughout the elementary grades. Four schools list a non-graded reading program extending through grade six; while, three others list the same for elementary mathematics.

Team teaching is utilized at both elementary and secondary levels by a very small number of Project schools. High school subjects offered in this manner include vocational agriculture, mathematics, and chemistry; however, no example is reported by more than two schools. Remedial reading classes are reported by twenty schools.

Another enrichment activity serving more than one purpose is the use of student science demonstrators. Eleven schools report using this activity in which high school science students perform science experiments for elementary classes. This program not only serves as an aid to elementary teachers and students but also provides meaningful experiences and personal development for the demonstrators.

D. Organizational Patterns

Various organizational patterns are employed by Project schools in order to facilitate instruction. Efforts are made to departmentalize instruction as low as the fifth grade. The 6-6 plan reported by 51 schools is the most commonly used pattern, followed by the 8-4 plan used by 31 schools. Other examples include a 6-3-3 plan, a 4-4-4 plan, and two 5-3-4 plans.

VI. Summer Workshop

The Project's single major attempt to upgrade teacher competencies is the one-week Summer Workshop which is

jointly sponsored by the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Small Schools Association, and The University of Texas. Each Project school is expected to have faculty representatives at the Workshop. The theme of the 1967 Summer Workshop was "The Master Teacher--Cornerstone of Learning." Representing 131 school districts, 116 of which were Project schools, 531 teachers and administrators participated in the weeklong activities. Seventy-three per cent (73%), or 389 teachers, of those attending were from Project schools. Only 21 Project schools did not send faculty representatives. One school, Coldsprings, sent 24 teachers.

A. Format

With the exception of two general sessions, the Workshop consists of two types of participation. One is the Administrator's Buzz Session which provides superintendents and other administrators current information on such topics as New and Revised Accreditation Standards, Problems of Vocational Education in Small Schools, and Special Education for Small Schools.

The second type of participation is the Interest Group. During the 1967 Workshop, 24 such groups were organized for the several elementary grade levels and the various secondary subject matter areas. Special sections were organized for elementary mathematics, inexpensive

materials, nongraded elementary, and projected materials. The Interest Groups met for 90 minute sessions ten times during the Workshop. Experienced professionals serving as group leaders came from the public schools and colleges of Texas, the Texas Education Agency, and other state agencies.

B. Resource Use Education

One new aspect of the 1967 Workshop was a series of group presentations on Resource Use Education. Eight special consultants from the Texas Advisory Committee on Conservation Education presented material which could be used in the classroom on such topics as Texas' Water Resources, Texas' Expanding Population, and Texas' Wildlife.

C. Registration Statistics

Registration statistics revealed several interesting items about the participants. One was the absence of young teachers, especially men, from the Workshop. Only five men indicated that they were age 30 or less. Other facts which indicated that the Workshop is not reaching younger teachers were that the mean age of the participants was 46, and the mean number of years of experience was 18. One hundred and fifty-seven teachers attended the Workshop for the first time. Approximately 61% of the participants had attended two or more years.

D. Evaluation

The evaluation team made valuable suggestions for improvement of the Workshop based on participants' comments:

1. Interest groups, discussions, and demonstrations should be limited to the situation and scope of the select audience.
2. There is an apparent need for pre-planning sessions of group leaders.
3. Participants requested more specific and practical suggestions.
4. Participants requested more field trips, displays, and demonstrations.
5. Participants requested more specialists, especially in the subject matter fields.
6. Interest groups should involve more verbal participation.

VII. Seminars for Talented Students

A. Overview

The Texas Small Schools Project attempts to provide stimulating experiences for its able and talented students through the Seminars for Talented Students. Some of the needs of these students are met and challenged through the utilization of college-centered seminar programs. In 1966-67, seminars are held at Henderson County Junior College, Athens; Hill Junior

College, Hillsboro; North Texas State University, Denton; South Plains College, Levelland; Paris Junior College, Paris; Sam Houston State College, Huntsville; and Howard Payne College, Brownwood.

B. Organization

Each seminar operates within a given Small Schools region. The seminar is planned by the superintendents and a representative from the local college. However, all of the seminars have certain common characteristics as outlined in a state-wide set of objectives and plans for operation. It is recommended that the seminars be problem-centered and not confined to subject matter boundaries, and that they be appropriate to outside resources available in the geographic area. The seminars, recommended for junior and senior students, meet about 15 times during the year with approximately 20-25 students participating per seminar.

C. Summer Seminar

For the second consecutive year the Project has conducted a seminar during the annual Summer Workshop. A selected group of 14 students from the several regional seminars attended the 1967 Summer Seminar. The group held discussions on selected topics and visited various features of the University of Texas, including the data processing center, the theater, and the library.

D. Evaluation

All seminar programs are designed to provide each participant with an enrichment experience that could not be provided in the student's school or community. Seminars in which the students themselves, under the direction of the college coordinator, choose their own topics prove to be the most successful.

The seminars are evaluated by the students themselves. Participants generally feel that their seminar experiences are worthwhile. Many of the participants agree that they have been made aware of social, personal, and academic problems which affect them and their peers.

VIII. School Evaluations

Each year Project schools make a self-evaluation of their school in terms of the goals of the Project. The evaluations consist of a summarv of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and plans for the following year.

Some of the most common characteristics found in the evaluations are:

A. Strengths

1. Small classes which approach a tutoring situation
2. Strong local support of the school system
3. Teacher opportunities to become acquainted with the abilities of each student
4. Continuing work on curriculum guides
5. Use of teacher aides
6. Implementation of materials centers

B. Weaknesses

1. Inadequate financing and facilities
2. Inadequate program for vocational training
3. Low enrollment limiting course offerings
4. Lack of pre-planning and organization
5. Difficulty in securing and keeping qualified personnel, especially mathematics teachers, science teachers, and librarians
6. Emphasis on the college-preparatory curriculum for all students

C. Plans for the coming year

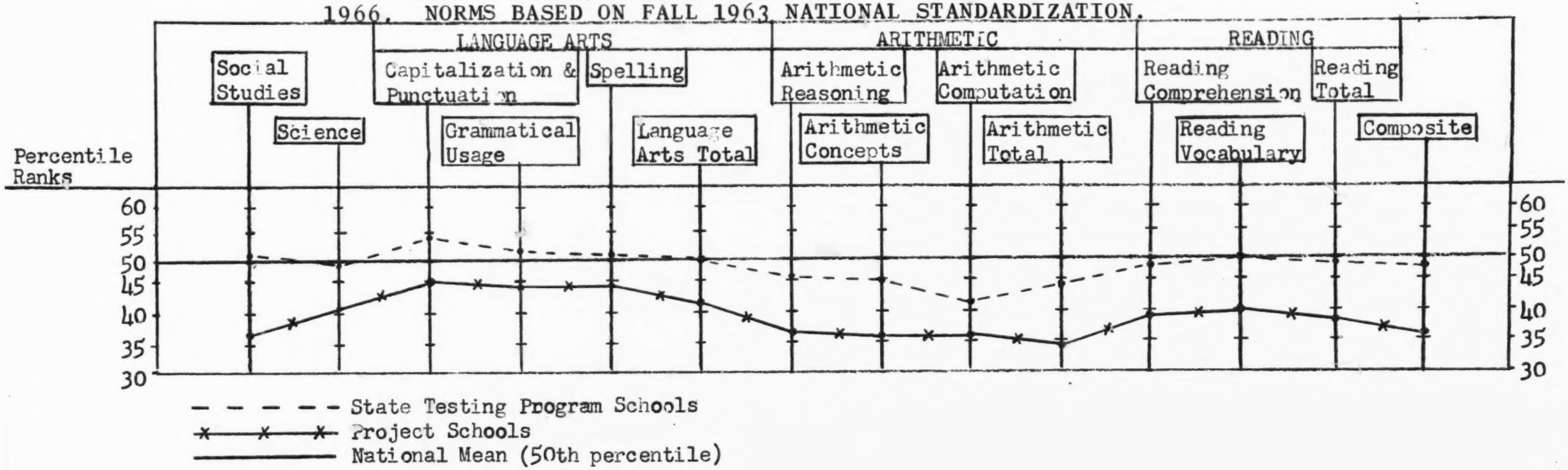
1. Greater supervision of correspondence courses
2. Expanded use of teacher aides
3. Further utilization of seminar students
4. Greater emphasis on in-service training
5. Investigation of the possibilities for increased vocational training for both girls and boys
6. Involvement of the total school community in the instructional program

Progress is evident in all activities of the Small Schools Project; yet, as in the entire area of education, there is still much to be done. The vitality of the Project lies in continuing interest and enthusiasm from everyone involved in its activities. Maintaining the identified strengths of this year's programs, correcting the weaknesses, and planning with dedication and foresight for the future assure that small schools in Texas will continue to strive for the best possible education of their boys and girls.

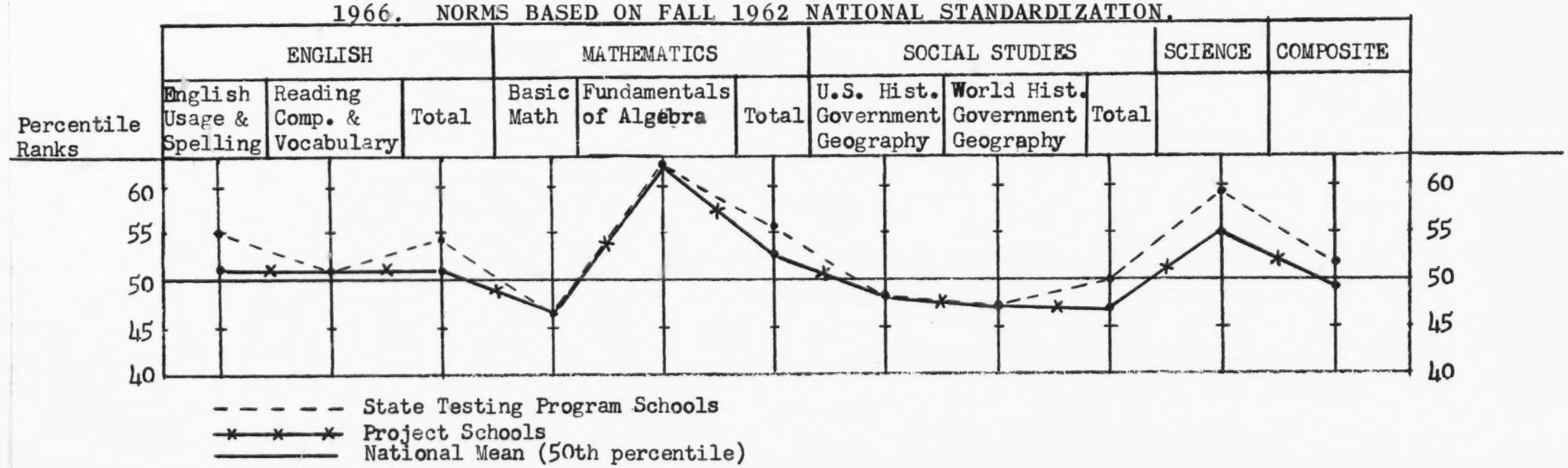
Appendix

Tables of Results from Small Schools Testing Program

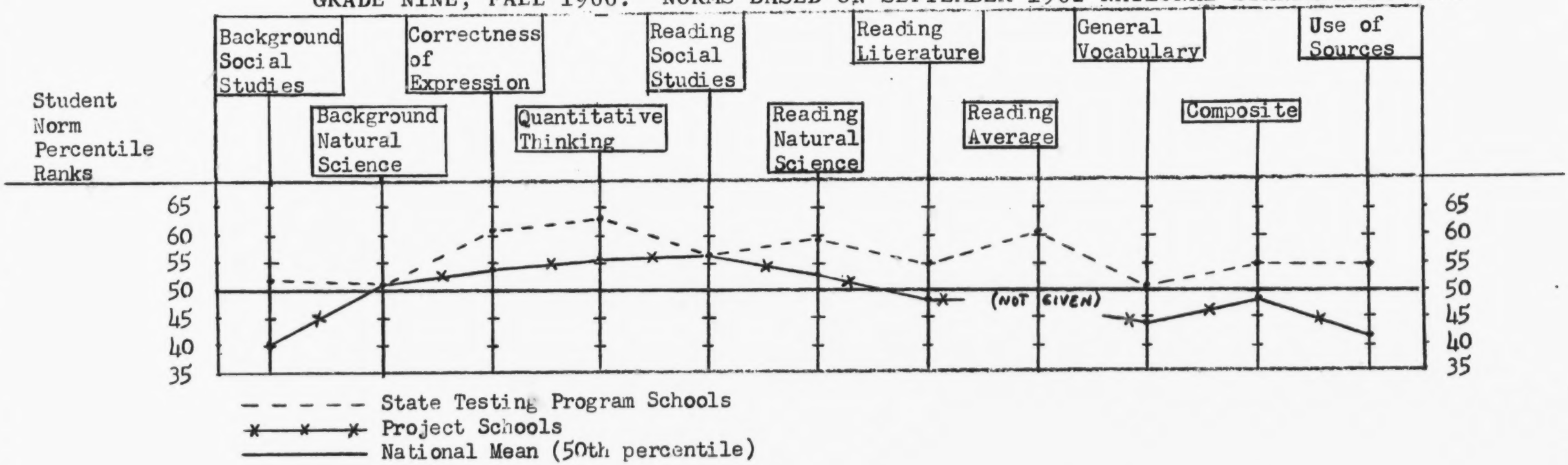
COMPARISON OF MEAN SCHOOL AVERAGES FOR 66 PROJECT SCHOOLS AND THE TEXAS STATE TESTING PROGRAM SCHOOLS ON THE SRA ACHIEVEMENT SERIES, MULTI-LEVEL EDITION, GRADE SEVEN, FALL, 1966. NORMS BASED ON FALL 1963 NATIONAL STANDARDIZATION.



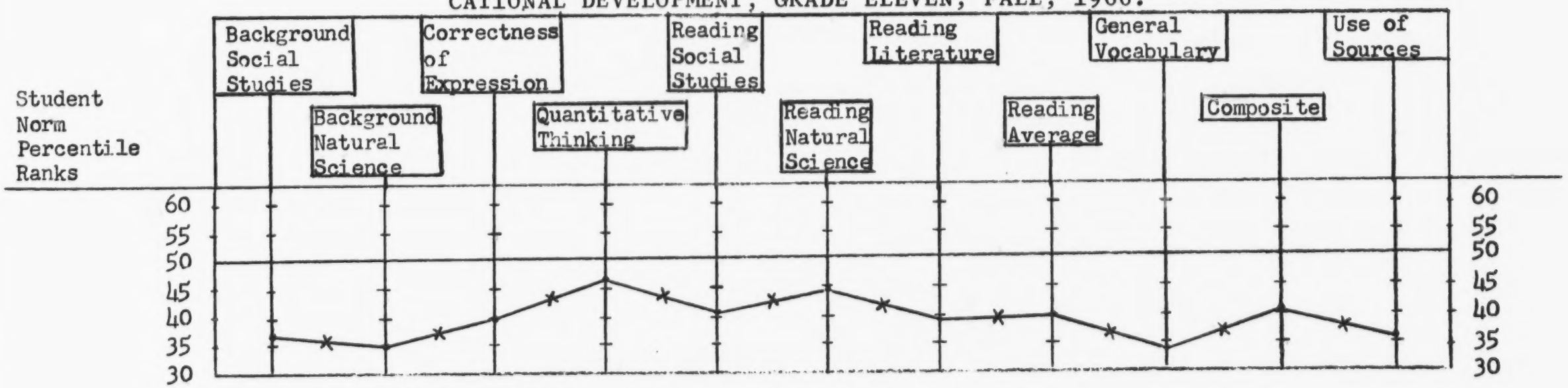
COMPARISON OF MEAN SCHOOL AVERAGES FOR 67 PROJECT SCHOOLS AND THE TEXAS STATE TESTING PROGRAM SCHOOLS ON THE BASIC ACHIEVEMENT TESTS OF THE SRA TEACH BATTERY, GRADE NINE, FALL 1966. NORMS BASED ON FALL 1962 NATIONAL STANDARDIZATION.



COMPARISON OF MEAN SCHOOL AVERAGES FOR NINE PROJECT SCHOOLS AND THE TEXAS STATE TESTING PROGRAM SCHOOLS ON THE IOWA TEST OF EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT GRADE NINE, FALL 1966. NORMS BASED ON SEPTEMBER 1962 NATIONAL STANDARDIZATION.



COMPARISON OF 60 PROJECT SCHOOLS WITH THE SEPTEMBER 1962 NATIONAL STANDARDIZATION GROUP ON THE IOWA TEST OF EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, GRADE ELEVEN, FALL, 1966.



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